

SHALL WE HAVE A PROFESSION
OF PHARMACY ?



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A brilliant reception was given to the members of the Trade Association of Philadelphia Druggists, Friday evening, December 28, 1883, by Dr. Lawrence Wolff, the well-known chemist, and president of the association, at his residence, 333 south Twelfth street, Philadelphia. There were present leading members of the medical and pharmaceutical professions, together with some of the principal citizens, including the mayor of the city and editors of several of the Philadelphia daily papers. As much good is likely to grow out of this successful entertainment, combining, as it did, two mutually dependent professions, whose tendency of late years seems to have been to drift apart, in friendly and social reunion with each other, and the public, it is well to consider the object that brought them together, and some of the results likely to grow therefrom.

The object was a very worthy one, viz., the elevation of professional pharmacy and the encouragement of professional and social relations between the professions of pharmacy and medicine.

It is the aim of all lovers of pharmaceutical science to secure the recognition of pharmacy as a branch of medical science, and the elevation of those who practice the art to the position of a liberal profession. How best to attain this object is a difficult problem to solve, and the difficulties in the way are not a few. In the first place there is a strong feeling existing upon the part of the professional world against trade in general. It is maintained that it is impossible for those engaged in trade to have a scientific and professional spirit, and without both the existence of a liberal profession is impossible. The object of a tradesman is to sell goods, and it is the tendency of trade to sacrifice every other interest to this end. But it is the object of a professional man to benefit science, his profession, and the cause of humanity; and to this end he would sacrifice everything else, were the principle at stake. A merchant to be great must be rich; but no amount of money will buy a scientific and professional position. Pharmacy is a trade. How can it, then, become a liberal profession?

In the second place there is likely to be a strong opposition to the idea from a portion of the medical press. It is well known that there are medical journals claiming to represent all there is professional and scientific, who owe their prosperity more to the fact that they are run for the purpose of making money than in the interests of the profession. If pharmacy is to be a science it must have a place in *medical* literature, not merely in pharmaceutical journals that never meet the eye of the medical profession; but these medical journals prefer that things should remain as they are, and that pharmacy should pay its

way in advertising. Now we do not propose to discourage legitimate advertising, but we do maintain that pharmacy has as much right in medical literature as therapeutics, and that the pharmacist should have equal credit in medical literature for his work as the physician; and that this attempt to keep pharmacy out of the medical journals for money-making purposes is an outrage to the science that these journals pretend to represent. A pharmaceutical literature founded on the fly leaves of medical journals, to be destroyed when the journals are bound, is worthless for scientific purposes. Not a few medical journals, however, will make every effort in their power to keep pharmacy down, believing that there is more money for them in pharmacy as it is, even though medical literature receive serious damage thereby.

In the third place any attempt to secure the recognition of pharmacy as a profession, will meet the opposition of a certain section of the medical profession who feel that its elevation to such a position will be to warm into life a very dangerous viper. The druggists, say they, are already our rivals, and as they come in direct contact with the public, while we are obliged to sit in our offices and wait for patients, they have unfair advantage. Elevate the drug trade to an equal position with the medical profession by making pharmacy a profession and you but give druggists increased power for mischief.

There is another section of the medical profession who hold that the pharmacist occupies the same relation to the physician as does his cook, and the elevation of pharmacy to the lofty position held by this class of physicians in their own estimation would be a serious sacrifice of professional dignity. This section of the profession will unite with those medical journals above referred to who hold that pharmacy is a trade because there is more money in keeping it there.

Another argument against the recognition of pharmacy as a profession is that pharmacists are guilty of certain irregularities that, unless corrected, will forever debar them from the privilege for which they ask. Do they not prescribe over their counters, it is asked, and what right have they to do so, not being educated in the knowledge of disease or its treatment? Then, too, they renew prescriptions indefinitely, without the doctor's knowledge or consent, much to the detriment of the public, and to the doctor's pocket book, who is thus cheated out of his fee. But more than all this, are not the druggists agents for the nostrum trade—the vilest species of quackery that ever disgraced a civilized and enlightened country? How can pharmacy ask a position among the liberal professions when it is guilty of conduct so unbecoming a professional and scientific position?

If pharmacy is to be a liberal profession it must drop all secrecy, attain a professional and scientific spirit, do scientific work on the *materia medica*, be represented in medical literature, and so guide its conduct in relation to the medical profession, on whom it must forever depend, as not to give just cause for offense. Now, while we are heartily in favor of the ideal that pharmacy is a branch of the science of medicine, and have worked to elevate it to a scientific and professional position, we would like to make the inquiry at this juncture of the proceedings, is it possible to raise pharmacy to the position of a liberal profession in the face of so many difficulties and such a storm of opposition? We wait with interest the reply of those concerned in this matter.

